

*Geo Williams*

C H U R C H   N E W S

F R O M   T H E   N O R T H E R N   C O U N T R I E S

Edited by the Northern Ecumenical Institute  
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. Harry Johansson, Sigtuna, Sweden

Editor: Rev. Johs. Langhoff, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

---

No. 16

April 27st, 1956.

---

Northern Home Mission Conference in Finland.

The Finnish members of the Northern Home Mission Board have sent out invitations for the seventh Northern Home Mission Conference to be held in Helsinki (Helsingfors) from August 23rd - 26th. The invitation emphasizes the feeling of fellowship among the Northern countries both in the matter of Western culture and in religious outlook. "Christianity, both in former and present times, unites us with the other Northern countries," the invitation states. "We have a common Lutheran Christian point of view, almost simultaneous periods of revivals and similar encouraging times, and many of our problems are also of the same nature."

For several years the Home Missions, a general term for the pietistic inclined movements within the Lutheran Churches in the Northern countries, have been in close contact with one another across the frontiers and at the conference, at which a number of prominent leaders of the Home Missions will deliver addresses, the lines of policy for Northern cooperation in the future will be discussed.

DENMARK

A Third Series of Texts to be Introduced in the Danish National Church.

The Liturgic Committee appointed by the Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs has put forward a proposal for a third series of texts to supplement the two already existing, so that sermon texts and scripture readings will be repeated only every third year instead of every second year as at present. The new series of texts for sermons are to be found in the four





Gospels exclusively for historical reasons and in order to follow the same principle underlying the two present orders of texts. The new series of scripture readings or lessons have been chosen solely from the Old Testament in order to meet the complaint that far too little material from this part of the Bible has been made use of by the Church up to now. The present two orders of texts include only very few lessons from the Old Testament. In certain cases ministers are allowed to choose their sermon text from the Epistles or lessons and thus a wider use of passages from the Old Testament has been made possible in the future.

The new order of texts has been compiled by a committee headed by Bishop Halfdan Høgsbro, Nykøbing, and seconded by the full Liturgic Committee. The draft proposal will be discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the Bishops in June. If this council approves the proposal it may be expected that before long the Danish National Church will also have three orders of texts as the case is in several other Lutheran Churches.

#### The Contact between Congregations in Greenland and Denmark to Strengthened.

The Bishop of Copenhagen, Dr. H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, has set up a committee to prepare a closer contact between individual congregations in Greenland and Denmark. So far the Committee, whose chairman is the Principal of the Pastoral Seminary in Copenhagen, Rev. L. Brøndum, consists only of Danish clergymen, but later on it will be enlarged by representatives from Greenland also. For the time being, the Committee is to get in touch with congregations in Denmark who might wish to come into direct contact with a congregation in Greenland. When Rev. L. Brøndum and Hans Munck, Home Missionary, Aarhus, this summer visit Greenland they will put the congregations in touch directly with one another.

Many of the congregations in Greenland are small and it is felt that a permanent connection with congregations in Denmark will be of great importance to them.

#### The Mission Covenant Church of Denmark sets up Post Graduate School.

In recent years one post graduate school after the other is being founded all over Denmark and on May 1st one of the Danish Free Churches will also open up such a school. It will be situated at Tripperup in North Sealand and will be called "Øresund".

Such a post graduate school is a voluntary course for young people of both sexes at the age of 14 - 18 years. The course offers instruction in theoretical as well as practical subjects. The State gives big contributions towards the running of these schools, and according to the new rules for obtaining scholarships it will be possible for young people of limited means to attend such schools at practically no personal expense.

Many of these schools are based on a firm Christian foundation and the leader of the new Mission Covenant Church School





states that at this school emphasis will be placed upon character forming instruction. At the same time the school will endeavour to help young people find a spiritual and cultural stand on Christian tradition. The aim of the school will be to guard our Christian and National heritage and to help the young people meet the inevitable demands of modern times for knowledge.

## FINLAND

### The Church takes Measures of Relief during the General Strike.

The General Strike in Finland, lasting for three weeks (March 1st - 20th), and involving 1 - 500,000 workers, left many families in a very tight financial situation, especially families with many children. In order to meet the need collections were made in many congregations. The Christian student associations also took part in these activities. The food and money collected were distributed through the help of deaconesses to the families in most pressing need.

These relief measures were, of course, quite non-political and did not act as an expression of any point of view as regards the Strike itself. Although the relief work in some cases was met with criticism on the part of employers, its nature of purely Christian charity was, nevertheless, on the whole acknowledged by both parties in the conflict.

### Christian Statement over the Radio during the General Strike.

While all kinds of labour activities were paralyzed by the Finnish General Strike a statement signed by various prominent Christian personalities, headed by Archbishop Ilmari Salomies, was broadcast over the Finnish radio. The other signatories were the former Governor Arvo Manner, the Rector of the State University Paavo Ravila, and "the grand old man" of the Finland-Swedish settlement movement Dr. Sigfrid Sereius.

"We have no wish to pass judgement on the matters directly concerning the General Strike", the statement says. "But faced with the question of the unity of the nation, its well-being, and its whole life no citizen can remain just a spectator without failing in his responsibility towards that which is the basis of a democratic form of life."

The statement continues, "Certain facts are evident. In the first place the prolonged strike causes disunity, results in bitterness, adds to the sufferings of innocent people, and impoverishes the country. In the second place it would not be in accordance with a democratic social order if one of the parties concerned took advantage of the situation to humiliate the other part or to enforce its will upon the other one ...

The causes underlying a general strike cannot be limited to the events immediately leading up to the strike. The ones really guilty are not the organizations or individuals whose decisions have led to this strike. It would be extremely ill-advised and unjust to blame them alone ... Now is the time for self-examination, for forgiveness, and for the establishment of mutual understanding. We are all of us responsible for the crisis because





we have not succeeded in creating the spirit of unity which might have prevented it. It is the duty of all of us to see to it that an improvement takes place. What we most urgently need is the renewed awakening of the strong spirit of unity which in a wonderful way has preserved our people in both good and evil days."

The Bishop of Tampere (Tammerfors), Dr. E.G. Gulin, sought to mediate in the conflict between the Labour Organizations and the Employers' Organizations, but with no immediate results.

Religious life went on practically unaffected by the General Strike. Only a few arrangements had to be postponed to a later date.

In the paper "Palkkatyöläinen", the publishing of which during the General Strike was allowed by the Strike Committee, the so-called "Association of Atheists" appealed to the workers on strike to withdraw from the Church, to "give notice of termination" as it said. This appeal, however, was followed only to a very limited extent.

At the termination of the Strike the Christian paper "Kotimaa" wrote, "The damages caused by the labour conflict cannot be remedied only by analyzing the reasons for it and still less by accusations. Therefore words of reconciliation and constructive efforts are needed just now. Our Church in particular is called upon to heal the wounds and bridge the chasms created. Any service in word or deed, no matter how insignificant it may seem, is of value in the present situation."

#### Well-attended Christian "Days of Culture" in Helsinki (Helsingfors)

In spite of the General Strike the Christian "Days of Culture" in Helsinki (Helsingfors), March 17th- 18th, arranged by the "Society for Christian Culture", had achieved very considerable attendance. The new President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, was to be seen in the audience at some of the meetings.

In his opening speech Professor Martti Hela stressed the fact, amongst other things, that the culture creating factors first and foremost are the inner values. The sacrifices of former generations do not seem to carry much weight in our times where materialistic pursuit and "the holy standard of living" has come into power. But none of us can blame the other. The selfishness evident in one's own little circle is reflected in the selfishness of the whole nation.

The programme included addresses by Dr. Martti Paloheimo on "The Mutual Relations between Men and Health" and by Dr. T.P. Virkkunen on "The Inward Liberation of Man".

Professor Kai von Fieandt and Dr. S. Serenius also spoke.

A short while before "Förbundet för svenskt församlingsarbete i Finland" ("Society for Swedish Evangelical Work in Finland") had arranged a series of religious meetings in Helsinki (Helsingfors) with the common theme of "Facing the Problems of Life", the same subject as was discussed at a similar series of meetings last year. These evenings were also attended by full audiences in spite of the suspension of all bus and tramcar service.





The chief speaker at the meetings, the Bishop of the Swedish diocese Dr. G.O. Rosenqvist, opened the meetings with an address on "It is a Matter of the Weekdays". Then Professor Valter Lindström from Åbo Academy spoke on "The Meaning of Work". The second evening was centred around problems of marriage and family life and the last evening was devoted to the relations between people in everyday life. The following Sunday the participants in the course met at a service held by Dr. Karl-Erik Forsell, Turku (Åbo), at which a collection of 67.000 marks was taken to be used for reconstruction work in the Porkkala district.

#### New Relationship between the Church and the Workers.

A new and more profitable relationship between the Church and the workers is beginning to take shape in Finland; the leader of the Settlement Central Office in the town of Lahti, the Rev. V.E. Partanen stated recently in an interview in the paper "Herättäjä". The general impression was previously that only the working classes were drifting away from the Church, but now the Church has become aware of the fact that "the intellectuals", for instance, feel equally far removed from the Church. The question of the relationship between the Church and the various groups within an industrialized society is being widely discussed and is, for instance, a matter of great interest to "Förbundet för finskt församlingsarbete" ("Society for Evangelical Work"). Here and there clergymen and employers or clergymen and Labour leaders meet for common discussions on these topics. While the representatives of the Church formerly were of the opinion that the only means of getting in touch with the workers was through the Christian labour movement, the settlement movement, social workers, and factory managements, it is now felt that a direct contact with the leaders of the Labour movement will prove more profitable.

No one from the Church any longer questions the right of the workers to organize in trade-unions and political associations. One of the leaders of a religious revivalist movement recently stated, "It is quite evident that only the workers themselves are able to further their own cause." At the same time the working classes are beginning to adopt a positive point of view of the Church. It is no longer looked upon as a support of Conservatism and an opponent of all progress. The Church is no longer being judged by its individual representatives, but by its general educative and reviving influence. A paragraph in the Programme of the Social Democratic Party demanding the separation of State and Church was cancelled in 1949 and in the new Statutes the paragraph dealing with religious matters reads, "The relationship between Church and State should be developed in accordance with democratic principles" - a positively inclined formulation. Even within the Communist Part the opinion of leaders who have left the Church should not be accepted on par with the points of view of the ordinary members. On the whole, a Finnish worker is in no way an adversary of religion. This is also proved by the low rate of members having left the Church.





Furthermore, Rev. Partanen pointed out that the workers in the past few years have also obtained representation in the administrative sections of the Church. Thus the majority of members of the economic administration of the congregation at Kymi are Social Democrats and a Labour representative also took part in the last Church Assembly.

## THE CHURCH

### 1,600 Theologians in Norway - Only 360 Employed by the Church.

At present there are in Norway 1,611 men and women theological graduates of the University of Oslo (1952) and of the Free Theological Faculty (1959). According to recently compiled statistics only 360 of them, however, hold office in the National Church. The voluntary organizations, including Foreign Mission Societies, employ 246 theologians, 210 of which are ordained as ministers. Furthermore, 132 theologians are employed as teachers at schools, and the rest occupy other posts either inside or outside the country's frontiers.

Although the influx of theological students is on a steady decline (see CN No. 16) it is not likely that there will be a shortage of clergymen in the next few years as the Norwegian National Church, naturally, will be able to draw from the many theologians now occupied with other than parish work proper. On the other hand the big and widely organized Foreign and Home Mission Societies fear that it will be difficult for them to find a sufficient number of secretaries and preachers in coming years.

### Professor von Camperhausen Granted Doctor Honoris Causa at the University of Oslo.

On March 13th the University of Oslo conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on the former Professor Hans Ulrich Freiherr von Camperhausen, D.D. At least every five years the University creates doctors honoris causa. This time eleven honorary doctors were appointed, but only Professor von Camperhausen received the title of Doctor of Divinity. He was present in person at the impressive ceremony in Oslo.

### Plans for More Evangelical Activities.

A comprehensive evangelical drive in the autumn is now being planned by 35 congregations in Oslo and environs. In the course of one week the congregations will send out more than 1,000 representatives who will call personally in the homes and invite people to meetings in the churches. The action is a continuation of a similar one last autumn in a small number of congregations (see CN No. 12). Simultaneous drives are being planned in a number of other towns as well. At least six congregations took part in a very successful action during the month of March with more than 200 "callers". Many people who so far had not attended any Church services accepted the personal invitations and gave the representatives of the Church a cordial welcome.





The idea of such a "calling action" came from the Lutheran Churches in America and in April the Director of Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dr. Conrad Thomsen, together with Bishop Smemo led a three-days conference at which two delegates from each of the 35 congregations in Oslo worked out the detailed programme for the drive.

#### Week of Religious Celebrations in Oslo next Easter.

As usual hundreds of thousands of Norwegians left the towns and set out for the mountains during the Easter holidays. The Church has long ago accepted this need for relaxation and skiing and every year it sends an ever increasing number of young clergymen into the mountains where they conduct hundreds of improvised services in hotels, tourist huts, or in open air during Easter.

While stressing the importance of these mountain services the weekly paper "Vår Kirke" ("Our Church"), which is supported by several Church leaders, criticises the Church for not making a greater effort to keep people in town and in their own congregations during Easter. In Norway both Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter-Day, and Easter-Monday are public holidays and since many people are also free from work on the Saturday in-between they get a continuous holiday of five days. Many active Christians, especially among the young people, also take the opportunity of leaving town. "Vår Kirke" supports a suggestion by the tourist organizations to arrange a religious week of celebrations in Oslo next Easter. Such a week of festival should include music, singing, exhibitions of religious art, and possibly also performances of religious dramas. "Not only would such an arrangement keep many people in town, but would also help everybody to celebrate Easter in a happier, more profitable, and better way", the paper concludes.

In all probability the Church, in cooperation with the tourist organizations, will now set to work on a more detailed programme for the festival.

#### Government Introduces a Bill about Women Clergymen.

As expected the Norwegian Government has introduced a bill permitting women to take holy orders. The bill proposes that the special clause in the Act of 1938 (dealing with the access by women to hold office in Government Service) excepting ecclesiastical offices when the congregation concerned is opposed to it for fundamental reasons should be repealed. Seven of Norway's nine bishops are in favour. The bill has been introduced in order to make it possible for women to accept, without reservations, the international convention concerning the political rights of women. The Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs in recommending the bill points out, amongst other things, that the parish councils as well as congregational bodies are free to give their views on ecclesiastical applicants and the religious points of view thus given their due. From religious quarters, however, - including also the Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" - it is stressed that the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs often appoints clergymen quite contrary to the opinions expressed by parish council, dean, and bishop.





It is, therefore, suggested that in case the special clause is repealed it should be transferred to the ecclesiastical legislation so that it may still be of practical effect.

#### Lutheran World Federation Meeting in Norway this Summer.

The Department of World Mission of the Lutheran World Federation will meet this year in Norway. A number of Norwegian mission societies will act as hosts for the conference which is to take place at Hurdal Verk near Oslo from August 9th-14th. Some 70 participants are expected, among them some of the most prominent mission leaders in Japan, India, Africa, and America. Taking the big mission conferences at Harare (for Africa) and Madras (for India) as its background the conference will draw up plans for mission work in the future. Moreover, the conference will distribute one million dollars in support of the young Churches most in need.

#### SWEDEN

#### Is Sweden the Most Secularized Country in the World?

An investigation conducted by the American periodical "Life" has come to the conclusion that Sweden is the most secularized country in the world. Whether this is correct is, of course, very difficult to decide, but the big Swedish daily, "Stockholms-Tidningen", dealing with the matter in a leading article is of the opinion that very likely Sweden is one of the least religious countries in the world. The secularization is further advanced here than in other places. The daily draws the attention to the interesting attempts at a new orientation as represented by many younger clergymen who feel that the Church exists for the sake of man and not vice versa. The paper raises the question whether the Swedish nation can afford to do without a Church which has no higher wish than to serve the people and which undoubtedly possesses an experience regarding spiritual and moral problems unequalled by any other tradition or institution.

"What have we really got to replace the Church?" the paper asks. "Its prayers, meditation, services, its guidance in Biblical matters? Concerts, art galleries, poetry, and theatres? They are all of them necessary, but they cannot replace faith, worship, and spiritual guidance and succour. The most secularized country in the world needs a cultural debate which, while desisting from superficial catchwords, searches for the values which the Swedish people in their indifference and blindness are about to throw away or forget."

#### New Lappish Hymn-Book in Preparation.

Before the end of the year a new hymn-book in the special language of the Lapps will probably be available. The Laplanders are nomads living in the Northern part of Sweden who have preserved their own culture and their own language right up to our times. The Lappish hymn-book hitherto in use has been sold out and consequently Bishop Bengt Jonzon in Luleå, in whose diocese the Laplanders are living, eighteen months ago requested the expert in Lappish, Dr. Harald Grundström, to





collect hymns for a new hymn-book. This hymn-book should contain hymns in all the three common Lappish dialects instead of in one dialect only as was the case with the old hymn-book.

Dr. Grundström's staff of co-workers includes practically all the experts in Lappish to be found in Sweden and it is expected that the work which will also be of great importance to the schools in Lapland will be concluded this year. The new hymn-book will contain 170 hymns.

#### Gustav Nyström, Former Missionary, Visits China.

The former missionary in China, Gustav Nyström, who last year acted as interpreter to the Secretary General of the U.N., Dag Hammarskjöld, during his visit to China, once more left for China via Hong-Kong in March on the invitation from Chinese Christian leaders. In Hong-Kong Mr. Nyström joined the representative of the World Council of Churches, the newly appointed Indian bishop, Dr. Rajah B. Manikam, who had also obtained an entrance permit to China and together they continued into the country.

In the course of his stay there, Mr. Nyström will pay a private visit to the old Swedish mission field in Hupeh.

In an article in "Svensk Veckotidning", published on his departure, Mr. Nyström declares that he looks upon the Christians in China with the same non-political eyes as before. What interests him is to see how they live and work and how they regard their task and their possibilities.

#### The Free Churches in Sweden Start a Film Bureau.

Recently the "Frikyrkliga Studieförbundet" ("Free Church Study Association") in Sweden has started its own film bureau. A special committee formed last year has made careful studies of the use of films in the work of the Free Churches and thereby discovered how very difficult it is to get a proper view of where to find suitable films and picture series. In consequence of this "Studieförbundet" decided to set up a film bureau. The first catalogue is now at hand giving a list of useful films and series of illustrations in various fields of activity. The bureau has come to an agreement with the various film companies renting out films so that it may also distribute their films.

Next autumn a more detailed catalogue will be issued, giving, amongst other things, a wide choice of programme outlines.



### New Bishop Ordained in Skara Diocese.

The new Bishop of Skara diocese, the Right Rev. Sven Danell, was consecrated at a solemn service held at the Cathedral of Uppsala in the presence of the Swedish King, the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, and 16 bishops, among them representatives of the National Churches of Norway and Denmark. The Finnish archbishop was not able to attend the service.

### Facing a Heavy Church Building Programme in Stockholm.

It seems as if Stockholm during the next 5-6 years will enter a period of church building projects more sweeping than ever before. It is estimated that at least ten and probably more churches are to be erected during this time. A few churches in the centre of the city have to be pulled down because of a necessary regulation of the streets and in place of one of these a new church must be put up, but otherwise most of the churches are to be built in the ever growing suburbs in the outskirts of the city. Some of these very large parishes have already been divided or are going to be divided in the near future so that six to eight churches will be needed here.

Various Free Churches are also planning to build several new churches in the suburbs of Stockholm and in some places the work is already in full swing. As it is difficult to obtain a permit for building a church alone the church hall in several places constitutes a part of a block of flats or shops or hotels. In this way a building permit is easier to obtain.

### Almost Half a Million Children Attend Sunday Schools in Sweden.

At the recent annual meeting at Östersund of the Swedish Sunday School Union the Secretary presented a report on the work of the Sunday schools which stated that altogether there are 453,154 pupils in the Swedish Sunday schools, divided among 11,117 Sunday schools with a total of 38,316 teachers. The statistics included 11 affiliated organizations and communities as well as those of the Adventists with some 65,000 pupils. The population of Sweden is about 7. mill.

### Extensive Restoration of the Cathedral of Lund.

The famous medieval Cathedral of Lund is facing an extensive restoration to be carried out in three stages and probably lasting for four years. The first stage just begun will take one year and cost 550,000 Sw.Crs. and include the restoration of the nave. The restoration of the southern aisle has already been in work for 18 months.

### The "Suicide Pastor" has Many Callers.

Some time ago a Lutheran pastor in Hålsingborg, the Rev. Erik Bernsprång, inserted an advertisement in the local daily with the following text, "Before committing suicide! Call 19730!" As a result of this advertisement he has had many inquiries from people who needed personal spiritual guidance and advice. Only a few of them were actually "suicide candidates", he says after three weeks' experience, but many others were in equal need of ecclesiastical help.





"The distance between the nation and the Christian congregation is so shockingly great in our secularized country that the ordinary man in the street never even contemplates the idea of looking up a clergyman", Rev. Bernsprång declares. "A person tempted to commit suicide is often so miserable that he will not ask any one for help. The only thing these desperate people are able to do is to grasp the hand of a friend, held out in the dark. Such a helping hand a proffered telephone number may prove to be. They grasp the possibility like a drowning man reaching for a straw. And their lives are saved."

Opinions on the Separation of State and Church Called For.

The Constitutional Committee of the Swedish Parliament has sent out the proposal recently put forward in Parliament, that the question of the separation of State and Church be thoroughly investigated, to a number of ecclesiastical and Free Church bodies - including all Cathedral Chapters, the theological faculties, leaders of schools, the Working Committee of the Free Churches, and several Free Church communities - asking for their opinion of the matter.

